

HERALD TRIBUNE  
M. 16,637  
S. 20,944

JAN 1 1961

# Appointment Will Reopen Navy-Air Force Controversy

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Admiral Hillenkoetter, former Central Intelligence Agency chief, once remarked to me that



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in the entire history of the U.S. Navy, there had only been one mutiny. He was referring to the now half-forgotten 'Revolt of the Admirals' in 1949, known at the Pentagon as "Operation 23." A group of admirals, led by Arthur W. Radford and Arleigh Burke, banded together then to prevent Air Force Secretary Stuart Symington and his supporters from scuttling the Navy. Mr. Symington triumphed temporarily, halting work on the super-carrier, the U.S.S. Forrestal, and ramming through a vast building program for the obsolescent B-36, a giant and costly long-range bomber. (Today, lines of B-36s rust at Strategic Air Command bases — and "Symington's folly" has been reversed in favor of more balanced forces.)

The Kennedy victory, and the emergence of Mr. Symington as the new Administration's top defense adviser, has reopened the controversy — and the Navy is again in danger. A new offense is being prepared by Mr. Symington's Pentagon supporters to cut the Navy down to a secondary or tertiary service and to make the Air Force dominant. In the name of "economy," the Air Force hopes to

limit the Navy to the Polaris-armed atomic submarine, plus small supporting forces.

There is a certain irony to this. It was the Air Force that fought most bitterly to kill the Polaris program — the argument being that land-based intercontinental and intermediate ballistic missiles made rocket submarines unnecessary. The fabulous success of our atomic submarines and the Polaris missile has undercut this argument, for it has become apparent even to the most doctrinaire military mind that the Polaris submarine is perhaps the most effective weapon in our arsenal. It is a moving target that can not be destroyed by a Soviet missile blitz, and it can fire its rockets from underwater where it is concealed from enemy reconnaissance planes.

The Air Force propaganda line now is that the Polaris submarine is great, but that carriers, missile-armed cruisers, and other surface forces are useless in a nuclear age.

Aircraft carriers, which are moving targets and can carry retaliation to the enemy if land-based missiles are knocked out, in a nuclear Pearl Harbor, are being described as "sitting ducks" for long-range bombers. That the Soviets have cut down their strategic bombing force to less than a bare minimum is a fact casually ignored by Air Force proponents. Ignored also is the very real point that if a carrier-based air armada is obsolete, so too is the Strategic Air Command. Both propositions are false.

The underlying flaw in the Air Force contention, however, is that it bases U.S. military strategy and tactics solely on the possibility of all-out war. It is essential to maintain a deterrent force of ICBMs and IRBMs, if only to disabuse the Soviets of the idea that they can deliver a quick knockout blow. But in the protracted conflict between East and West, the Navy's destroyers, cruisers, aircraft carriers, and auxiliary ships are a vital element of our defense.

"Brushfire" wars, in which the Communists excel, are not fought with hydrogen bombs. In fact, there are few responsible world leaders who believe that all-out nuclear war is a factor in Communist strategic thinking. The U.S. Navy, most powerful in the world, helps keep the peace by patrolling the seas. Its incomparable value was demonstrated during the Korean War when it made the waters around Japan an American lake. It was again demonstrated when President Eisenhower moved decisively to prevent the Communist takeover of Lebanon by landing Marine detachments. It has kept the Formosa Straits and the Mediterranean safe for the West. And when Fidel Castro planned an invasion of Central America, it was the U.S. fleet that interposed itself between the would-be aggressors and the anti-Castro Latin American nations, thereby setting up a screen in the Caribbean.

The Caribbean situation is perhaps the most dramatic example of the Navy's irreplaceable role. For the Air Force would have been helpless to stop the flow of men and munitions to Central America except by bombing Cuban ships and Cuban beachheads. This could well have precipitated a shooting war in which Cuba would have rallied the support of the Soviet Union and Red Island into another Korea.

The Navy, preventing an invasion by its mere presence, stopped Fidel Castro dead in his tracks without firing a shot. It was a salutary demonstration both to the Cuban dictator and to his Communist bosses.

There will be two umpires in the contest: President Kennedy and the Congress. The lobbying, therefore, will be continuous and urgent, with the leakage of "secret" testimony an everyday occurrence. The Navy is no slouch at this game, and it can probably take care of itself on Capitol Hill. The place to watch is 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Will Mr. Kennedy take time to assess the pros and cons — or will he merely bow to Senator Symington? The defense of the nation hangs on the answer to this question.